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ABSTRACT

After the year 2000 one-third of the American population will be members of minority groups; neglecting minorities will have disastrous effects on the nation. The United States has made some progress in improving the lives of minorities, but America is presently moving backward--not forward--in its efforts to achieve the full participation of minority citizens in the life and prosperity of the nation. Statistics on American minorities are provided. Past federal programs that have benefited minorities are reviewed. A national commitment must be made toward the goal of enabling America's minorities to attain a quality of life as high as that of the white majority. The following strategies for success are identified: (1) institutions of higher learning should strengthen their efforts to increase minority recruitment, retention, and graduation; (2) national leaders should identify and implement policies to stimulate economic growth and restore national solvency; (3) elected officials should lead efforts to assure minority advancement; (4) private and voluntary organizations should initiate new, and expand existing, programs designed to increase minority participation and achievement; (5) each major sector of our society should contribute to a new vision of affirmative action around which a broad national consensus can be formed; (6) minority public officials, institutions, and voluntary organizations should expand their leadership roles; and (7) education leaders should improve coordination and cooperation among all levels and systems. Data are illustrated on eight figures, and 40 bibliographic notes are included. (BJV)

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ONE-THIRD OF A NATION

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ONE-THIRD OF A NATION

A Report of
THE COMMISSION ON MINORITY PARTICIPATION
IN EDUCATION AND AMERICAN LIFE

May 1988

American Council on Education • Education Commission of the States

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FOREWORD

This report marks a special point in the history of the American Council on Education. Along with the Education Commission of the States, we have chosen to challenge the nation to join us in raising the full participation of minority citizens in American life to the top of our public and private agendas.

The ACE Board does not enter into this challenge lightly. We do so with the realization that we who lead the colleges and universities of this nation have much to do. We know that the task before us may consume much of the remainder of our professional lives, and that we will succeed only if our commitment is unreserved.

To carry out our own part of this challenge to the nation, ACE has created an Office of Special Minority Initiatives, and has committed substantial resources to ensure ongoing activities.

"One-Third of a Nation" represents a significant starting point. This summer, ACE will hold a conference open to institutions that wish to begin planning strategies to increase the recruitment and retention of minority students, faculty, and administrators. In the fall, we will issue a handbook to guide individual institutions in their efforts to enhance these activities.

It is in a spirit of hope and renewal that we issue this report to the American people. Let us all, individually and collectively, strengthen our nation through commitment to the full participation of all of our citizens.

Robert H. Atwell
President
American Council on Education

FOREWORD

We have made enormous progress over the last 30 years in dismantling barriers to the full participation of minorities in American life. But we have a long way to go before we can say that the American dream is everyone's dream.

We have underestimated the depth and complexity of the situation as well as the need for sustained institutional and governmental commitment. We also have found that some of the more difficult barriers to full participation by minority young people are not so obvious. An unacceptably large number conclude at an early age that education is not for them. Even among those who make it into four-year colleges and universities, attrition rates are unacceptably high. This calls for a new understanding and a more creative approach to the barriers to success faced by minority youth from kindergarten through graduate school.

The Education Commission of the States has identified this issue as a national priority. I believe states can play a major role in renewing the nation's commitment to access and success for minority students. State leaders can shape the vision necessary for institutions and communities to act, to see that a third of our talent, a third of our promise, does not go to waste. States can hold institutions accountable for developing the talents—all the talents—of their people. State leaders can fashion coherent, multifaceted approaches to the problems of minority attrition from the education ranks.

We need, as a nation, to harness the energy and imagination of the people who continue to make ours the world's leading system of higher education. If we can do this, we will open the doors of the American dream to all our citizens.

Frank Newman
President
Education Commission of the States

PREFACE

In the spring of 1987, the leaders of the American Council on Education and the Education Commission of the States came together in deep concern that the nation's progress in minority advancement had waned significantly in recent years. Most particularly, we were disturbed by the discouraging trends in the education of minority citizens and the implications of these trends for the future of the nation.

At my suggestion, ACE and ECS formed the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, and asked former Presidents Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter to serve as honorary co-chairs. Thirty-seven prominent Americans agreed to serve as members. This broadly bipartisan group includes former high-ranking federal officials and leaders of business and industry, minority organizations, higher education, and state and local government.

After extensive examination of demographic and economic data, review of the relevant research in the field, and consultation with numerous experts, the Commission reached a disturbing conclusion: America is moving backward—not forward—in its efforts to achieve the full participation of minority citizens in the life and prosperity of the nation.

We applaud the progress that has been made in many areas. But in education, employment, income, health, longevity, and other basic measures of individual and social well-being, gaps persist—and in some cases are widening—between members of minority groups and the majority population.

If we allow these disparities to continue, the United States inevitably will suffer a compromised quality of life and a lower standard of living. Social conflict will intensify. Our ability to compete in world markets will decline, our domestic economy will falter, our national security will be endangered. In brief, we will find ourselves unable to fulfill the promise of the American dream.

We deeply believe that now is the time for our nation to renew its commitment to minority advancement. We must redouble our efforts

to expand the role and status of our minority population. All segments of society—public officials and private citizens; government, business, and non-profit institutions; moderates, conservatives, and liberals—must commit themselves to overcoming the current inertia and removing, once and for all, the remaining barriers to full participation by minority citizens in education and all other aspects of American life.

We bring this statement to the American people with a specific intent. Our goal as a nation must be nothing less than to eliminate, as soon as possible, the gaps that mark our racial and ethnic minority population as disadvantaged. We should seek over the next two decades to surpass the impressive progress we have made over the past 25 years—and to permit ourselves no backsliding. Our hope is that in 20 years, an examination of key social and economic indicators will reveal that America's minority population has attained a quality of life as high as that of the white majority.

Frank H. T. Rhodes
President
Cornell University
Chair
Commission on Minority
Participation in Education
and American Life

SUMMARY

The Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life was established last fall by the American Council on Education and the Education Commission of the States. The impetus for its formation, and for our involvement, was a shared deep concern over the faltering pace of minority advancement.

Evidence to support this concern is to be found everywhere in our society—in our schools, on our college campuses, on the street corners of our cities. The statistics by which we measure our social and economic health and well-being clearly indicate that progress has virtually halted, and in many areas we have lost ground.

In any time, the failure of our society to integrate key segments of its population should be of major concern. It is especially worrisome now, as we look toward the 21st century. Shortly after that milestone, one-third of Americans will be members of minority groups.

In the months since its formation, this Commission has examined available demographic data and key economic indicators, reviewed relevant research, consulted experts, conducted discussions among ourselves, read numerous articles and commentaries on these concerns, and continued to make our own observations about the seriousness of these issues.

We have concluded that now is the time for our nation to renew its commitment to minority advancement. We must redouble our efforts to expand the role and status of our minority population—men and women, boys and girls. All Americans—as individuals and as members of various groups, social organizations, and sectors of our society—bear this responsibility, and all must share in the task.

We offer this statement by way of rededicating ourselves to past principles that have brought progress and to challenge ourselves and the nation to discover new ways to achieve full, equitable participation of minority citizens in American life.

INTRODUCTION

America is moving backward—*not* forward—in its efforts to achieve the full participation of minority citizens in the life and prosperity of the nation.

If we allow these disparities to continue, the United States inevitably will suffer a compromised quality of life and a lower standard of living.

In education, employment, income, health, longevity, and other basic measures of individual and social well-being, gaps persist—and in some cases are widening—between members of minority groups and the majority population.

If we allow these disparities to continue, the United States inevitably will suffer a compromised quality of life and a lower standard of living. Social conflict will intensify. Our ability to compete in world markets will decline, our domestic economy will falter, our national security will be endangered. In brief, we will find ourselves unable to fulfill the promise of the American dream.

As a nation, we must attack this problem **now**, with new energy and in new ways. The progress of the past cannot be cause for complacency about the future.

The goal we suggest is simple but essential: That in 20 years, a similar examination will reveal that America's minority population has attained a quality of life as high as that of the white majority. No less a goal is acceptable. For if we fail, all Americans—not just minorities—will be the victims. But if we succeed, all Americans will reap the benefits.

TOMORROW'S "ONE-THIRD OF A NATION"

More than 50 years ago, President Franklin D. Roosevelt surveyed the plight of Americans caught in the grip of the Great Depression and declared: "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished."[1]

In 1988 we are seeing the emergence of another "one-third of a nation"—the blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asian Americans who constitute our minority population.

The United States is far different now. Increasing national prosperity, progress in securing civil rights, action by business, labor, educational institutions, and other organizations, and the creation of numerous state and federal social programs have enabled millions of previously disadvantaged citizens to move into the mainstream of American life.

Still, a great number of people have not shared in this progress. In fact, the most recent government figures show that in 1986, 13.6 percent of Americans were officially counted as poor—a significant increase from the low of 11.4 percent in 1978.[2]

In 1988 we are seeing the emergence of another "one-third of a nation"—the blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asian Americans who constitute our minority population—many of whom are afflicted by the ills of poverty and deprivation. The visibility of these groups in the American tapestry is growing rapidly.

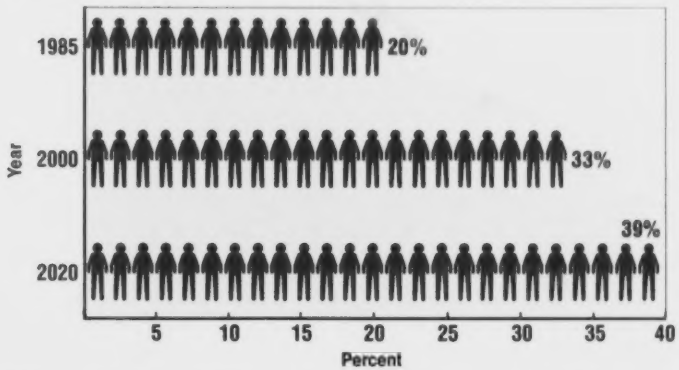
- Today, 14 percent of all adults in the United States—and 20 percent of children under 17—are members of these groups.[3] By the year 2000, one-third of all school-age children will fall into this category.[4]
- Already, in 25 of our largest cities and metropolitan areas, half or more than half of the public school students come from minority groups.[5] By the year 2000, almost 42 percent of all public school students will be minority children or other children in poverty.[6]

- Between 1985 and 2000, minority workers will make up one-third of the net additions to the U.S. labor force. By the turn of the century, 21.8 million of the 140.4 million people in the labor force will be non-white.[7]

Those figures are testimony to the nation's increasing diversity—cultural as well as demographic. At the same time, they confront us with a distinct challenge, for these same groups suffer disproportionately from unemployment, inadequate education, ill health, and other social and economic handicaps.

It should be noted that levels of educational attainment and income for Asian Americans are comparable to those for whites, and sometimes exceed them. In fact, the experiences of this group may offer valuable lessons as the nation seeks ways to promote minority advancement. Nevertheless, some segments of the Asian American population experience problems similar to those of other minority groups. This report concentrates on blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians. Together they comprise over 90 percent of the minority population, their impact on the total society is thereby greater, and data on them are more readily available.

Figure 1: Projected minority school-age population



Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, No. 1022 (Washington, D.C.: March 1988), Table 1: 12 and No. 995 (November 1986), Table T: 14.

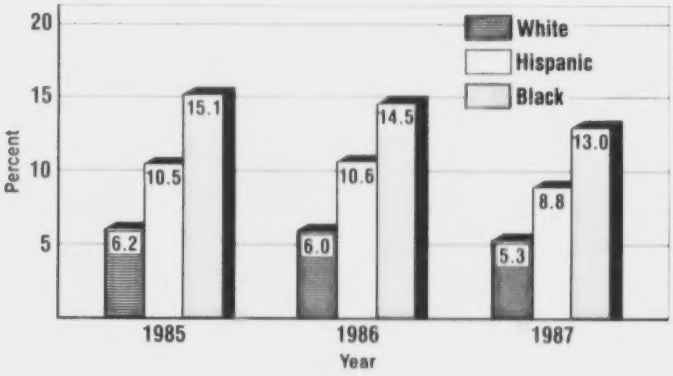
Although the broad indicators mask a wide range of educational attainment and affluence within the minority population, the average disparities are alarming:

- In 1986, 31.1 percent of blacks and 27.3 percent of Hispanics had incomes below the poverty level—nearly three times the rate for whites.[8] Median black family income was only 57 percent that of whites, $17,604 as opposed to $30,809. Median Hispanic family income was $19,995.[9]

In 1986, 31.1 percent of blacks and 27.3 percent of Hispanics had incomes below the poverty level—nearly three times the rate for whites.

- The unemployment rate for blacks in 1986 was 14.5 percent—more than twice the rate of 6.0 percent for whites. Among Hispanics, 10.6 percent were unemployed. In 1987, black unemployment declined to 13.0 percent and Hispanic unemployment to 8.8 percent—but the rate for whites fell to 5.3 percent.[10] As of April 1988, unemployment for whites had dropped to 4.6 percent, while the rate for blacks stood at 12.2 percent and for Hispanics at 9.3 percent.[11]
- Minority group members are far less likely to have a college education. In 1986, 20.1 percent of whites over 25 had completed four years of college or more. The rate for blacks was 10.9 percent, and for Hispanics only 8.4 percent.[12]

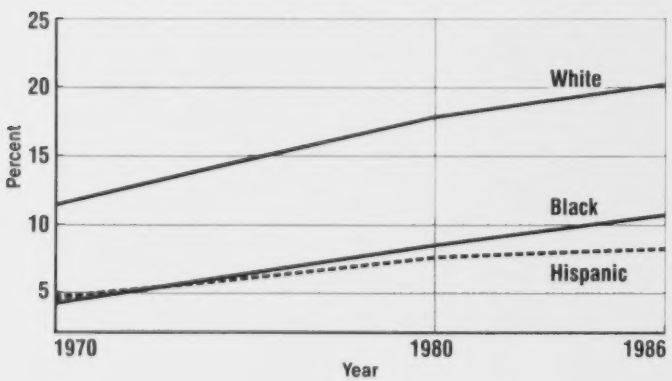
Figure 2: Unemployment rates, by race and Hispanic origin



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Current Labor Statistics: Employment Data," *Monthly Labor Review* (Washington, D.C.: September 1987), Table 1.6: 91–92.

- As of 1986, black life expectancy at birth was 71.4 years—exactly four years less than that for whites.[13]
- In 1985, the mortality rate among the youngest black infants (under 28 days) rose nationally for the first time in 20 years. By itself our black infant mortality rate would rank the U.S. 28th in the world in keeping babies alive in the first year of life.[14]
- The immunization status of non-white infants has grown substantially worse in recent years. The proportion not fully immunized against polio rose by 55 percent between 1980 and 1985. The percentage not fully immunized against diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DPT) increased by 68 percent. In the same period, rates of immunization against various diseases among white infants either improved or worsened only slightly.[15]
- Of the 1.05 million high school seniors who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in 1985, just over 70,000 (9 percent) were black and few more than 17,000 (3 percent) were Hispanic. Furthermore, of the black students, 73 percent scored below 400 on the verbal section and 64 percent scored below 400 on the math portion. Of the Hispanic

Figure 3: Percent of persons 25 years old and over completing four or more years of college, by race and Hispanic origin



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1988* (Washington, D.C.: 1987), Table 202:125.

students, 59 percent had verbal scores below 400 and 45 percent had math scores below that level. For whites, only 31 percent had verbal scores below 400 and only 22 percent had math scores that low.[16]

Rapid progress in eliminating these disparities may prove more difficult for the disadvantaged among the new one-third of a nation than for many of whom President Roosevelt spoke. Minority Americans are burdened not by a sudden, universal, yet temporary economic calamity, but by a long history of oppression and discrimination. They remain largely segregated in minority neighborhoods and minority schools. For many, full participation in the dominant culture imposes a painful choice: to dilute or abandon a rich and distinctive heritage. Above all, they are marked by the color of their skin as different, and therefore more vulnerable.

Minority Americans are burdened not by a sudden, universal, yet temporary economic calamity, but by a long history of oppression and discrimination.

Yet, minority citizens are not separate. They are, in a real sense, the new America. In a few years they will comprise one-third of the nation's children; soon afterward they will be one-third of the nation's adults.

They are not other; they are us. How well and under what conditions minority groups are integrated into American life—and the extent to which they participate in and contribute to our educational system and the economy—will determine the continuing strength and vitality of the nation as a whole.

PAST PROGRESS

The United States has made significant progress toward the goal of full participation for minority citizens. Yet, too often this fact goes unacknowledged. Advocates for disadvantaged groups, understandably eager to focus the attention of their fellow citizens on unfinished business, often ignore or minimize the very markers of improvement that might inspire new energy for their cause. Those who question the efficacy of government programs or court mandates also have been eager to cite examples of regression, and to render verdicts of failure.

The progress is there—on the record, revealed in census figures and the lives of real people. We must recognize and underscore that progress.

This unwitting alliance has had at least one unhappy result: because so many successes have gone unnoticed and unremarked, a sense of weariness and discouragement has come to characterize the national debate over the pace and process of minority advancement.

Yet the progress is there—on the record, revealed in census figures and the lives of real people. We must recognize and underscore that progress. It is impressive proof of what we can achieve together—and of what disadvantaged citizens can achieve for themselves. It is a tribute to the perseverance and frequent heroism of minority citizens in demanding their rights. And it is a tribute to the capacity of our democratic system to respond and change.

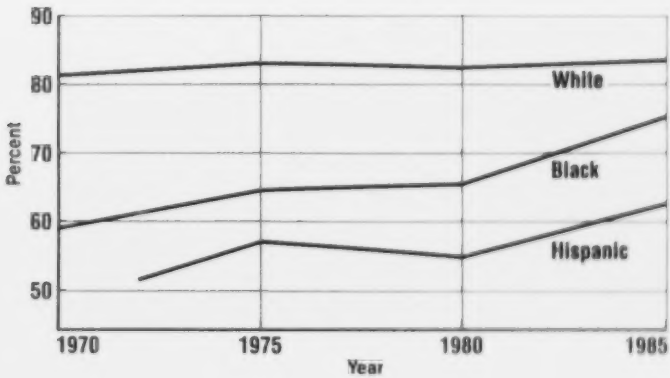
Consider these facts:

- In the tumultuous 1960s, while the median income of white families rose by 34 percent after inflation, black family incomes increased by 48 percent. The recession of the early 1970s slowed growth for all groups, but even in this period, black median family income tracked closely with that of whites. Income for both groups rose by less than one percent between 1970 and 1975.[17]
- Education programs like Head Start and Chapter I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act led to real progress for poor and minority students in educational achievement. For example, Chapter I students have gained

seven to 12 months in reading and 11 to 12 months in math for every year they have participated in the program, resulting in significant advancement for millions of young people.[18]

- Between 1977 and 1987, average scores for black students taking the SAT increased by 21 points on the verbal portion and 20 points in math. In contrast, scores for white students rose just one point on the verbal test and remained the same for math.[19]
- High school graduation rates for most minority students have improved dramatically. In 1970, only 60 percent of blacks between the ages of 18 and 24 had graduated from high school. By 1975, this figure had risen to 65 percent, and by 1985 it was 76 percent. For Hispanics, the high school graduation rate in 1975 was 56 percent; a decade later, the figure was 63 percent.[20]
- College attendance and graduation by minority students increased significantly, due in large measure to the availability of federal aid. Between 1971 and 1981, total college minority enrollment jumped by 56 percent.[21] Enrollment

Figure 4: Percent of persons 14-to-24 years old graduating from high school, by race and Hispanic origin.



Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 404 (Washington, D.C.: November 1985), Table B-4, and No. 409 (September 1986), Table 6; 9; also, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1986," forthcoming report.

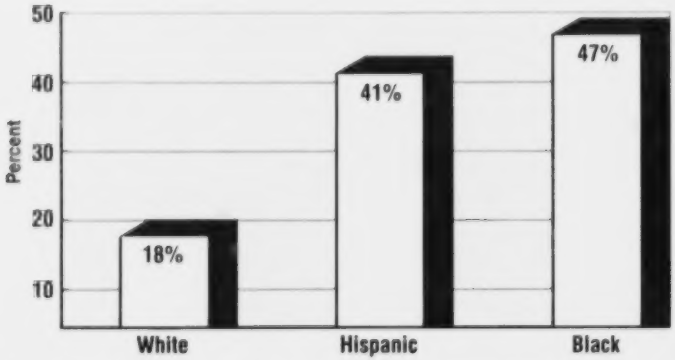
growth in community colleges and adult education programs was especially heavy.

- In the 15 years after Medicaid began, black infant mortality dropped 49 percent, more than nine times the rate of improvement during the preceding 15 years.[22]

These gains did not erase earlier disparities. Most groups made progress in this period. With respect to high school graduation, for example, the rate for whites increased marginally between 1975 and 1985, from 83 percent to 84 percent.[23] But the remaining gap should not keep us from acknowledging that the improved educational performance of blacks and Hispanics represents a major social achievement.

Celebrating progress should not engender complacency. Nor do we want to paint a false picture. Successive waves of inflation and recession in the 1970s and early 1980s, accompanied by dramatic changes in our economic structure, eroded much of the improvement cited above, and the sustained growth of recent years has not made up the difference. Also, such averages must not obscure the fact that young people bear the greatest burden of deprivation. In 1985, 23 percent of all American preschool children were members of families with

Figure 5: Percentage of children in poverty in 1985, by race and Hispanic origin



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 158 (Washington, D.C.: October 1987), Table 7: 35.

We believe it is useful to underscore the advances made by minority groups in the past 25 years. The formula for progress is no mystery.

incomes below the poverty level. For black children, the figure was 47 percent, for Hispanics 41 percent, and for whites, 18 percent.[24]

Nonetheless, we believe it is useful—indeed essential—to underscore the advances made by minority groups in the past 25 years, and the conditions under which they were achieved. The formula for progress is no mystery. It consists of four elements:

- Economic growth with low inflation;
- A political consensus favoring minority advancement;
- Adequately funded, well-administered programs at every level of government and in the private sector targeted at disadvantaged citizens; and
- The determination of minority group members to help themselves.

LOST GROUND

In the last 10 years, not only have we lost the momentum of earlier minority progress, we have suffered actual reversals.

The lesson that progress is possible, given the right economic conditions and a strong national commitment, is especially relevant now. In the last 10 years, not only have we lost the momentum of earlier minority progress, we have suffered actual reversals in the drive to achieve full equality for minority citizens.

In higher education, for example, the picture of stalled progress is dramatically clear. **During the same period when the pool of minority high school graduates was becoming bigger and better than ever, minority college attendance rates initially fell, and have remained disproportionately low.**

These figures illustrate the dimensions of the problem:

- Between 1970 and 1975, the percentage of black high school graduates 24 years old or younger who were enrolled in or had completed one or more years of college rose from 39 percent to 48 percent; over the same period, the corresponding rate for whites remained steady at 53 percent. However, between 1975 and 1985, while the college participation rate for white youths climbed to 55 percent, the rate for blacks dropped to 44 percent.[25] Recently released figures indicate that in 1986, the rate for blacks rose to 47 percent— still slightly below 1975.[26]

- The rate of college attendance for Hispanic youths remained stagnant between 1975 and 1985. Available evidence indicates a slight decline, from 51 percent to 47 percent.[27]

- For American Indians, high school graduation and college attendance rates remain the lowest for any minority group. A report by the Cherokee Nation found that only 55 percent of American Indians graduate from high school, and of these only 17 percent go on to college.[28]

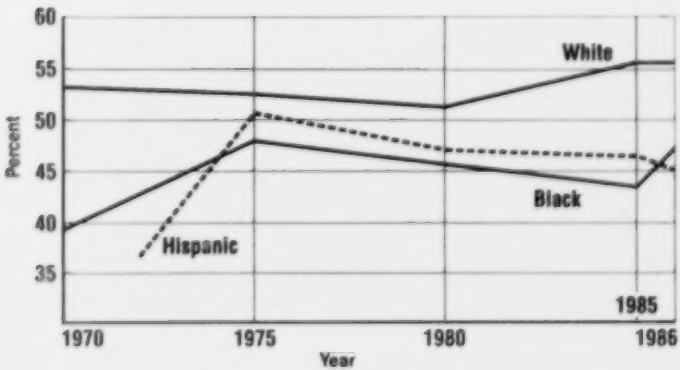
Minority students continue to complete their undergraduate degrees at rates far lower than their white counterparts.

These figures become even more disturbing when we look beyond college enrollment to college graduation. Minority students continue to complete their undergraduate degrees at rates far lower than their white counterparts. Also, a much smaller percentage go on to graduate and professional schools.

For example, although blacks made up 9 percent of all undergraduate students in 1984–85, they received 8 percent of the associates' degrees and 6 percent of the baccalaureate degrees conferred that year. Hispanics made up 4 percent of enrollees, but received only 3 percent of the baccalaureate degrees. Hispanics did better at the community college level, receiving 4.5 percent of the associates' degrees. By contrast, 80 percent of the undergraduate students in 1984–85 were white—but they received 85 percent of the baccalaureate degrees.[29]

At the graduate level, the falloff for blacks is dramatic. Between 1976 and 1985, the number of blacks earning master's degrees declined by 32 percent. Although Hispanics and American Indians registered slight increases, their share of

Figure 6: Percent of persons 24 years old and younger enrolled or who have completed one or more years of college, by race and Hispanic origin



Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 404 (Washington, D.C.: November 1985), Table B: 4, and No. 409 (September 1986), Table 6: 9; also, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1986," forthcoming report.

master's degrees remains disproportionately low—2.4 percent and 0.4 percent.[50]

The number of blacks earning doctorates dropped by 5 percent in the same period; for black men it declined 27 percent. The number earned by Hispanics and American Indians increased significantly, from 396 to 677 for Hispanics and from 93 to 119 for American Indians, but at the doctoral level, too, their share is low—2.1 percent and 0.4 percent.[51]

. . . fewer minority students are preparing for teaching careers. This suggests that in the future, not only minority students but **all** *students will see fewer minority teachers over the course of their schooling.*

In certain critical fields of study, the minority presence is nearly non-existent. For example, in computer science, only one black received a doctorate out of 355 awarded in 1986. In mathematics, blacks received only six of the 730 doctorates awarded in that year.[52]

Current statistics also indicate that fewer minority students are preparing for teaching careers. In the nation's historically black colleges and universities, which traditionally have produced more than half the black teachers, the percentage of first-year students intending to major in education dropped from 13.4 in 1977 to 8.7 in 1986.[53] This suggests that in the future, not only minority students but **all** students will see fewer minority teachers over the course of their schooling. Such an outcome is a particular problem for minority students, for whom such teachers serve as important role models. But it also is a loss for majority students, who otherwise only rarely may be exposed directly to minority citizens in professional roles.

We stress these trends in higher education because of its special importance in the life of our country. For more than a generation, a college education has been a key part of the American dream—and, for many individuals and families, a good measurement of progress toward its fulfillment. Statistics on incomes and living standards support the belief that college is the passport to greater opportunity and achievement.

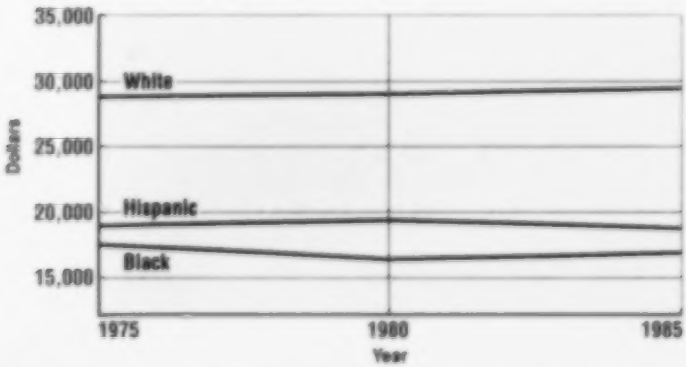
Participation in higher education also is an important barometer of well-being for the nation as a whole. We rely on our colleges and universities to impart to young people—and in-

Currently, we lose disproportionate numbers of minority students at each level of schooling, culminating in low participation rates in higher education.

creasingly to older students as well—the knowledge and skills that will prepare them for leadership in business, the professions, and government. A decline in educational attainment by any substantial population group is cause for deep concern—especially at a time when technological advances and global competition put a premium on trained intelligence, advanced skills, and a high degree of adaptability.

The aptitude for higher education and the ability to succeed in college and graduate school do not materialize suddenly at age 18; they are developed in childhood. Currently, we lose disproportionate numbers of minority students at each level of schooling, culminating in low participation rates in higher education. Only through intense, coordinated efforts at every stage—beginning with adequate prenatal care, improved nutrition, and quality child care and extending through programs to increase minority retention and improve student performance at the elementary and secondary levels—can we hope to reverse these dismal trends. Too few children benefit from such efforts. Although preschool programs increase school success and reduce later expenditures for special and compensatory education, fewer than one in five eligible children is enrolled in Head Start. The Chapter 1 Compensatory Educa-

Figure 7: Median family income in constant 1985 dollars, by race and Hispanic origin



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1987* (Washington, D.C.: 1986), Table 732: 436.

tion program, which reduces the probability that a child will have to repeat a grade, now serves only half of those who need its services.

Beyond those for higher education, other statistics also suggest a reversal of progress toward full minority participation in American life—statistics that should be a cause for concern to all citizens, and a spur to national action.

Statistics tracking family incomes, for example, reveal a disturbing widening of the gap between living standards for minorities and whites:

Will we rekindle our commitment to eliminating those disparities, a commitment that in the past often bore remarkable fruit?

- After rising from 54 percent of the white median in the 1950s to 61.5 percent in 1975, black median family income fell to 57.5 percent of the white median in 1985.
- In the same ten-year period, Hispanic families also fell back slightly. In 1975 their income was only 66.9 percent of the median for whites; in 1985, the figure was 65.2 percent.[34]
- Between 1973 and 1986, average real annual earnings for black males ages 20 to 24 fell by 50 percent, from $9,818 to $5,299 in 1985 dollars.[35]

With progress in key areas having come to a halt or even moving into reverse, the American people are at a critical point of decision: Will we rekindle our commitment to eliminating those disparities, a commitment that in the past often bore remarkable fruit? Or are we resigned to a long-term retreat, in which the gaps between minorities and the majority will widen and continuing inequality will be tolerated?

THE PRICE OF NEGLECT

Social analysts have offered widely divergent reasons for our loss of momentum in the drive for minority participation. Similarly, how best to remedy historic inequalities is subject to strong disagreement. However, one thing remains clear: Left uncorrected, the current trend signals continuing social tension, and is an omen of future national decline.

"Progress in education won't solve all our problems. But without progress in education, we can't solve any of our problems."

For minority citizens, the dangers inherent in this situation are obvious. Continuation or worsening of present levels of poverty, educational attainment, ill-health, unemployment and underemployment, infant mortality, early childhood neglect, crime, and other social problems would be calamitous.

For the nation, such a development would mean disaster. The collective educational deficit suffered by minorities poses a particular threat, reminiscent of previous challenges in American history. As stated in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, passed on the initiative of President Dwight D. Eisenhower partially in response to the successful Soviet launch of Sputnik I, "The security of the nation requires the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women. . . . We must increase our efforts to identify and educate more of the talent of our nation."[36]

Not only national security but other challenges demand improved educational performance. President Lyndon B. Johnson noted that "Progress in education won't solve all our problems. But without progress in education, we can't solve any of our problems."[37]

For members of minority groups, education is the key to advancement on other measures—notably employment and income. In a society and economy that value higher order skills so greatly, lack of education ordinarily dooms minorities—as it dooms so many others—to a life of deprivation.

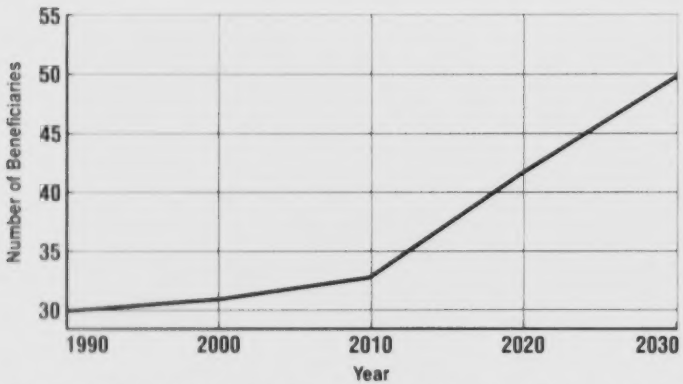
But inadequate minority education has far broader implications. Consider just one issue: Social Security. Early in the next century, when the members of America's baby boom

In a society and economy that value higher order skills so greatly, lack of education ordinarily dooms minorities—as it dooms so many others—to a life of deprivation.

generation begin to retire, relatively fewer active workers will be called on to support far greater numbers of retirees. In 1987, for every 100 workers contributing to Social Security, 30 individuals were drawing benefits. By the year 2030, there will be about 50 beneficiaries per 100 workers.[38] As indicated earlier, the work force of that time will include a much higher percentage of minority workers than does today's. Americans of every background, then, have a stake in the competence, employability, and earning power of those future minority workers if we hope to provide for the income support and health care needs of an aging population.

The harmony and unity of our society also depend on our ability to regain the ground we have lost and renew our momentum on minority progress. Twenty years ago the Kerner Commission, in the wake of widespread riots in America's urban ghettos, raised the stark prospect of a nation "moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal."[39] The challenge issued by the commission was straightforward: to end racism and eliminate the economic and social disparities that victimize minority citizens.

Figure 8: Projected number of Social Security beneficiaries per 100 covered workers



Source: *1988 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance Trust Funds* (Washington, D.C.: May 1988), Table 30: 80.

Today we face the same challenge. As *The Kerner Report Updated* proclaimed recently, "We must bring the problems of race, unemployment, and poverty back into the public consciousness, put them back on the public agenda."[40] These problems also belong on the private agenda of each and every American. The existence of a permanent underclass, made up primarily of members of minority groups, is inconsistent with our national ideals. It is a threat to our democratic system, which can succeed only by extending to every citizen an opportunity to share in the nation's life and prosperity.

The credibility of democracy as a vehicle for advancing the hopes and dreams of millions of people in less developed nations depends on our performance.

The future of the United States in the global arena is at stake as well. The growing presence of minorities in the nation's work force and the contributions they make will affect not only our domestic economy but also our international competitiveness. However, more than economic standing is in question; the credibility of democracy as a vehicle for advancing the hopes and dreams of millions of people in less developed nations depends on our performance.

For generations, part of the allure of our system has been its ability to create an ever-rising standard of living for the many as well as the few. The appeal of what we call the American way of life has resided not only in the promise of our free political institutions to "secure the blessings of liberty," but also in the capacity of our free market economy to "promote the general welfare."

Today, a growing majority of the world's people themselves are Asian, Latin, and black. They are subject to competing claims about which system best produces material plenty, social justice, and freedom—that of the Western democracies, or that of the Eastern socialist bloc. We Americans know and argue, from our own experience and that of our democratic allies, that our model holds the greatest promise for these emerging peoples; that we march under the banner of true social justice. However, the credibility of our claim depends in large part on our ability to demonstrate that our system provides full equality and full participation to all our citizens, including those of color.

A NATIONAL GOAL —AND A NATIONAL COMMITMENT

Now is the time to end the dangerous drift and complacency that have caused us to default on America's promise to help **all** its citizens attain equality of opportunity. All segments of our society—public officials and private citizens; government, business, and non-profit institutions; moderates, conservatives, and liberals—must commit themselves to overcoming the current inertia and removing, once and for all, the remaining barriers to full participation by the emerging one-third of the nation—minority citizens—in education and all other aspects of American life.

Our goal as a nation must be nothing less than to eliminate, as soon as possible, the gaps that mark our racial and ethnic minority population as disadvantaged.

Our goal as a nation must be nothing less than to eliminate, as soon as possible, the gaps that mark our racial and ethnic minority population as disadvantaged, and by so doing to enable them to enjoy a quality of life as high as that of the white majority. As a specific objective, we should seek over the next two decades to surpass the progress of the past 25 years—and to permit ourselves no backsliding. This means putting in place **now** the programs and interventions—and promoting the personal values and standards—required for ultimate success. Delay will guarantee failure. The minority teachers, leaders, scientists, and professionals our society will need in 20 years are beginning their schooling now.

The United States has a proud history of investing in the elements of progress—in infrastructure, in science and technology, in people. Eliminating the disparities between the lives and prospects of minority young people and those of their white counterparts is an essential investment in our future national well-being.

Our hope is that in 20 years, an examination of the statistics indicating educational access and achievement, employment and income, life expectancy, and other measures of social well-being, such as we have presented here, will reveal no disadvantage for minorities in comparison with other groups in the population.

We recognize the difficulties of this task, and the many obstacles to its completion. But America needs all the talent it can get. And we know that the American people, their government, and their institutions—and most important, minority citizens themselves—are capable of great accomplishments. The effort to achieve full participation of minority citizens in American life can engender excitement as well as difficulty. Therefore we believe that our fellow citizens will recognize its urgency and work toward its attainment.

STRATEGIES FOR PROGRESS

We can identify a set of seven core strategies that, if followed, will lay the groundwork for success. Changes in attitudes as well as in policies and programs will be required.

It is not enough merely to set a goal for society or issue a challenge. Achieving substantial parity between minority and majority citizens in education, employment, income, and other important indicators of personal and social well-being will require specific actions by institutions throughout the public and private sectors of our nation. It is vitally important that individual Americans determine what they can do to help reach this objective. But to a great extent, progress will depend on the initiatives taken by government, business, educational institutions, voluntary organizations, and, most of all, minority citizens themselves.

It is within neither the charge nor the competence of this Commission to itemize the exact programs and policies that should be implemented by each institution in each sector. However, we can identify a set of seven core strategies that, if followed, will lay the groundwork for success. These strategies—stated as challenges—are outlined below.

While adoption of these strategies is an essential condition for progress, carrying them out will not be easy. Changes in attitudes as well as in policies and programs will be required. Nonetheless, we maintain that a commitment to these strategies will put America back on the track to full equality of opportunity for all its citizens.

1. We challenge America's institutions of higher learning to renew and strengthen their efforts to increase minority recruitment, retention, and graduation.

America's colleges, universities, and professional schools can be proud of the role they have played in the progress described earlier in this report. But for our society to surmount the challenges it faces, institutions of higher learning must greatly expand their efforts to increase significantly the number and proportion of minority graduates.

To begin implementing this strategy, each higher education institution should make a commitment to:

- recruit minority students more aggressively at every level—community colleges, adult education programs, four-year institutions, and graduate programs;
- create an academic atmosphere that nourishes minority students and encourages them to succeed;
- create a campus culture that values the diversity minorities bring to institutional life—one that responds powerfully and forthrightly to the incidents of racism that have occurred too often on campuses in recent years;
- place special emphasis on inspiring and recruiting minority candidates for faculty and administrative positions; and
- work with educators at the primary and secondary levels to improve the education, training, and preparation of minority students.

The higher education community historically has acted as an important goad to the nation's conscience.

We focus first on colleges and universities for several reasons. First, they are the principal institutions in which America's future professionals, leaders, and role models will be educated and shaped. Second, the higher education community historically has acted as an important goad to the nation's conscience, calling the citizenry to higher standards of intellectual achievement and social justice. Finally, these institutions have functioned as a vital social laboratory in which solutions to knotty national problems have been tested and perfected. We call on higher education to continue this role—and to expand it.

2. We challenge national leaders to identify and implement policies to stimulate economic growth and restore national solvency.

As noted earlier, steady economic growth coupled with low inflation can contribute significantly to minority progress. Of course, a growing economy by itself will not ensure equality of opportunity and full participation for minority citizens; without strong political leadership and a national consensus, such progress is impossible.

Economic growth is vital for two reasons: First, by increasing national wealth it provides the wherewithal for adequate so-

cial programs—for example, student grants and guaranteed loans. Second, and more important, economic growth is a highly effective social program in itself; it creates the jobs, rising wages, and expanding opportunities that enable greater numbers of people to meet their own needs and master their own destinies.

Economic growth is a highly effective social program in itself; it creates jobs, rising wages, and expanding opportunities.

The experience of the 1980s suggests, however, that to be fully effective, economic growth must be accompanied by yet another condition: national solvency. The unprecedented federal deficits of the past seven years—fueled by large tax cuts and simultaneous increases in defense spending and entitlement programs—have generated heavy pressure for reductions in spending on some social programs and limits on the growth of others.

These changes have had a disproportionate impact on minority citizens. For example, the downward trend in college enrollment by minority students is, in our judgment, in part attributable to reductions in federal student grants and a change in the loan-grant mix of aid. The shift to much heavier reliance on loans confronts hard-pressed minority families with a discouraging set of choices: either incur heavy debt to send their children to college, or forgo higher education altogether. Too many have opted for the latter.

The bipartisan budget summit between the President and Congress last year was an important step toward restoring national solvency. Further steps are needed. The election of a new President this November, the seating of a new administration and a new Congress in January, and the scheduled report by the National Economic Commission next March provide a unique opportunity for the nation's leaders to identify—and implement—policies that will reduce our federal budget deficit and international trade deficit and stimulate economic growth.

We believe that additional federal investment in the nation's children and youth—especially its disadvantaged minority youth—must be a basic component of the package. The revenues needed to finance this investment while still reducing the

deficit should be generated through economic growth and balanced, fair taxation.

As part of any such plan, the mix of federal spending on student assistance should be changed to create additional incentives for low-income minority and white participation. We must avoid false economies. What the nation might "save" by cutting back on budgets for higher education and student aid is far less than what it will lose if it fails to invest generously in the education, training, and preparation of its citizens for the future.

The presidency remains the preeminent leadership platform in America. If the presidential trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound, who then will come to battle?

3. We challenge the nation's elected officials to lead efforts to assure minority advancement.

Willingness and participation by all segments of society is a prerequisite for minority advancement. But certain sectors bear a special responsibility. In particular, leadership by the nation's elected officials—in the White House, the Congress, and the state capitols—is indispensable.

Looking back on the greatest advances for American minorities, and the moments of liveliest action, we can see that political leaders—including those at the top—always played an important part. Their best efforts are needed again.

The role of the White House deserves special mention. The presidency remains the preeminent platform of political and moral leadership in America. So if the presidential trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound, who then will come to battle? Along with the efforts of minority citizens themselves, clear, articulate, vigorous leadership by the President of the United States has been a primary ingredient of past success. Without such leadership, Congress is unlikely to support the measures that make progress possible. Without such leadership, federal, state, and local agencies are unlikely to lend their full energies to the cause. And without such leadership, the American people are unlikely to think as deeply about the challenges they face, or act as energetically on behalf of minority advancement.

Presidential leadership can and should be reinforced by leadership from the governors and other state and local officials. An environment in the state capitols that keeps the issue of minority educational achievement at the top of the public policy agenda, supports effective institutional efforts in all sectors to promote minority participation, and uses incentives and accountability to leverage sustained efforts and commitment is a necessary condition for progress. Success over the next 20 years will depend to a great extent on state initiatives, many of which already have been enacted.

4. We challenge private and voluntary organizations to initiate new and expand existing programs designed to increase minority participation and achievement.

Continued progress will depend to a far greater extent on the actions and initiatives of non-governmental institutions.

We must continue to safeguard the legal gains made in the past by the nation's minority citizens, as well as those government programs already in place that contribute to their advancement. Because of budgetary restrictions, broad new federal initiatives in this area probably will be difficult to achieve, even apart from their importance or advisability. Continued progress, therefore, will depend to a far greater extent on the actions and initiatives of non-governmental institutions and cooperative efforts between government and the private sector.

Businesses, labor unions, churches, foundations, community organizations, civic associations—the vast network of private and voluntary institutions that compose the fabric of American society—must increase the energy and resources they devote to minority progress. Through their own job creation and training initiatives, scholarship and student assistance programs, talent searches and internships, intervention, remedial education, and enrichment activities, and other efforts, the private and voluntary sectors can have as great an impact as court decrees and congressionally mandated programs.

Many of these institutions already sponsor such activities. Where possible, their programs should be expanded, and the best of them used as models by other organizations seeking to

make their own contribution to fulfillment of the American promise. The need is great, the possibilities unlimited, and the opportunities vast for building a shared sense of achievement and satisfaction through concerted joint and individual efforts.

We must identify, encourage, train, hire, and promote more minority men and women throughout our organizational structures.

5. We challenge each major sector of our society to contribute to a new vision of affirmative action around which a broad national consensus can be formed.

Strong, dramatically effective efforts are needed at every level of society to promote the spirit and ethic of affirmative action. By that we mean applying the extra energies and resources that lead to the identification, encouragement, training, hiring, and promotion of minority men and women throughout our organizational structures. These efforts will require an increased understanding by the American people of the growing diversity of our population, and a collective determination to build our nation's future strength on this foundation. The success of such endeavors has the potential to defuse the occasionally acrimonious debate over some of the processes now used to carry out affirmative action.

Even as we call for increased efforts to assure full, equitable participation of minority men and women in American society, we recognize that affirmative action remains an essential tool for achieving our goal. We are still a long way from the day when legal means will be totally unnecessary. However, now is the time for the American people and their leaders to open a public debate that can lead to a national consensus on affirmative action.

6. We challenge minority public officials, institutions, and voluntary organizations to expand their leadership roles.

The social and economic progress described earlier in this report has benefited many minority families and individuals. A significant number have entered the secure middle class. More minority candidates have been elected to public office. And increasingly, minorities are being appointed to positions of influence and leadership in government and business.

The progress of the past 25 years also has broadened the base of minority institutions. Until recently, many such institutions labored under unfair burdens of poverty, discrimination, legal barriers, and other handicaps. However, with the ascent in status of greater numbers of minority individuals, these organizations have increased their membership, their resources, and, as a result, their power and effectiveness.

Some of these institutions have a long history, and have played a significant role within minority communities and in society at large. The nation's historically black colleges and universities, for example, have a proud record of producing teachers, doctors, religious leaders, artists, writers, and heroes of the civil rights movement—citizens whose contributions are a luminous part of America's history.

The minority community itself has the primary responsibility for supporting and developing its institutions.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, the Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses, the National Council of Negro Women, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the National Council of La Raza, ASPIRA Association, Inc., the Tribally Controlled Colleges, the National Congress of American Indians; newer, emerging groups such as the Cuban-American National Council, Inc. and the National Association for Asian Pacific American Education; regional and local minority and minority women's groups—the story of such organizations devoted to minority advancement often is overlooked in analyzing the progress of the recent past and in planning for the future.

These institutions have been a breeding ground for minority leadership—leadership that will be counted on to help inspire, motivate, and organize the nation's efforts to eliminate the gaps that separate minority citizens from their majority counterparts. That leadership must work more closely on minority issues, coordinate its activities, and target scarce resources to the most effective programs.

With the expansion of the minority middle class, leaders both within and outside the minority community increasingly are emphasizing the responsibility of those who have "made it" to

Leaders at all levels of education must recognize their interdependence and decide that attention to the total system is among their highest priorities.

help lift up those who have not. Calls for successful individuals to recognize their importance as role models and to become more directly involved in activities that help others break the shackles of poverty and ignorance mark a new phase in the civil rights movement, and should be reinforced. Other ethnic and religious groups that have entered American life have gone through the same process.

This focus on individual responsibility and quality leadership does not absolve the broader society from continuing responsibility for efforts to promote minority advancement; rather, it signals a growing acceptance of the fact that minorities are attaining their rightful place in that society, and thus are subject to increased expectations around the role they themselves will play.

Similarly, the minority community itself has the primary responsibility for supporting and developing its institutions. However, corporations, foundations, and, where appropriate, government should increase their efforts to help these organizations advance minority interests and attack the problems plaguing the minority population.

7. We challenge education leaders to improve coordination and cooperation among all levels and systems.

The importance of understanding our educational systems as interactive and interconnected seems undisputed; educators have expounded this notion with great frequency and vigor. Yet as a nation we have not developed the value orientation or the concomitant structures required to increase the level of coordination and cooperation among our systems from the preschool to graduate school levels.

It is patently obvious that we cannot increase the participation and performance of minority students in higher education without attacking the educational deficiencies that develop in their early years. Yet our system of schooling remains fragmented, characterized too often by over-specialization, territorial concerns, and competition for resources.

Inevitably, inner city schools that fail to educate their students will influence the direction and focus of the universities in which those students enroll. The opportunity for community colleges to serve their local constituents adequately is tied inextricably to the availability of day care and preschool education.

To address these issues, leaders at all levels of education must recognize their interdependence and decide that attention to the total system is among their highest priorities. With the assistance and support of other public policy makers, they should seek to build an organizational and operational infrastructure that fosters cooperation, mutual respect, and creative interaction among educators and administrators throughout the system.

FROM ONE-THIRD TO THREE-THIRDS OF A NATION

The plain and simple fact is that the full participation of minority citizens is vital to our survival as a free and prosperous nation.

We have entitled this statement "One-Third of a Nation"—but in truth, it is an urgent message to America about three-thirds of a nation: all of us. Generosity, compassion, and a strong sense of social justice—impulses that flow outward—are essential qualities in the struggle to create a better society. Our appeal in this message, however, is also to enlightened self-interest. The plain and simple fact is that the full participation of minority citizens is vital to our survival as a free and prosperous nation. Inevitably, our fate will be shared.

Our fundamental goal is to erase the inequities that characterize the lives of minority Americans. By taking action now, we can make minority citizens **more visible physically** in every realm—in schools, in colleges and universities, in government, in the work place—and **less visible statistically,** as the conditions in which they live resemble more closely the conditions enjoyed by the majority.

Perhaps it truly can be said that no other nation on earth, at this point in history, has quite the opportunity that we do to create a fully functioning democracy where all citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, or sex, can participate completely in all aspects of national life. This dream need not be deferred any longer. Ours is the challenge; ours will be the prize.

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The Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life pays special tribute to the organizations and individuals that have given their time and energy to the development of this report. The Commission realizes that it is not easy to revisit the issues raised here. Countless hours have been spent trying to create a new vision for increasing the participation of minority citizens in American society. The final report is testimony to the difficulty of finding new things to say on this subject. It also is a tribute to the importance of investing adequate time in the building of a new commitment to an old agenda.

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The United States faces a major social and economic challenge in the coming decades: how to bring minority citizens into the mainstream of American life more successfully and expeditiously. We must succeed in this new and more vigorous effort. The consequences of failure—to our economy, to social harmony, to our national security—are dismal to contemplate.

At the dawning of the 21st century, a dozen short years from now, one out of three American school children will be members of minority groups; already, one-third of our new workers fall into these categories. We must educate and train them to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive international marketplace. The future of democracy depends on it.

I congratulate the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life for bringing this issue to the attention of all Americans, and endorse its thoughtful and provocative strategies for change. It has been a privilege to serve with President Carter as the commission's honorary co-chair.

Gerald R Ford

GERALD R. FORD

The Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life has identified one of the most serious threats to our society. We must erase the persistent—and in some cases widening—gaps between the conditions of life experienced by most minority Americans and those enjoyed by the majority population.

Full participation by citizens of every race and ethnic origin in all aspects of American life, and particularly in education, is essential to the growth and well-being of the nation. This is not just a matter of insuring them a fair share in the American dream; it could well affect our economic and social survival.

I congratulate the commission for this vital and courageous report, and urge all sectors of our society to act on its recommendations. It has been an honor for me to be associated with this endeavor, and to serve as honorary co-chair with President Ford.

Jimmy Carter

JIMMY CARTER